

REMARKS

Claims 1-3, 6-8, 10, and 11 are now pending in the application. The Examiner is respectfully requested to reconsider and withdraw the rejections in view of the amendments and remarks contained herein.

REJECTION UNDER 35 U.S.C. § 103

Claims 1-3, 5, 8 and 10 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Hatch (U.S. Pat. No. 6,367,810) in view of GB. 1 299 685 (GB '685). This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Claim 1 has been amended to recite that the “supporting ring is T-shaped and includes a radial leg integrally formed as a unitary member with a first axial leg extending in a first axial direction relative to said radial leg and a second axial leg extending in a second axial direction opposite to said first axial direction relative to said radial leg.” Applicants respectfully assert that neither Hatch nor GB '685 or Nagasawa teach or suggest a T-shaped supporting ring with a radial leg integrally formed as a unitary member with first and second axial legs, as claimed.

More specifically, referring to Figures 1-5 of Hatch (and particularly Figure 2), it can be seen that the support ring is C-shaped or U-shaped. GB '685 merely shows a support ring 3 with an L-shaped cross section. Nagasawa also fails to show a T-shaped supporting ring, as claimed. Because neither Hatch nor GB '685 nor Nagasawa teaches or suggests a T-shaped support ring, as claimed, Applicants respectfully assert that claim 1 and each corresponding dependent claim would not have been obvious.

Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of this rejection are respectfully requested.

CONCLUSION

It is believed that all of the stated grounds of rejection have been properly traversed, accommodated, or rendered moot. Applicants therefore respectfully request that the Examiner reconsider and withdraw all presently outstanding rejections. It is believed that a full and complete response has been made to the outstanding Office Action, and as such, the present application is in condition for allowance. Thus, prompt and favorable consideration of this amendment is respectfully requested. If the Examiner believes that personal communication will expedite prosecution of this application, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at (248) 641-1600.

Respectfully submitted,

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